



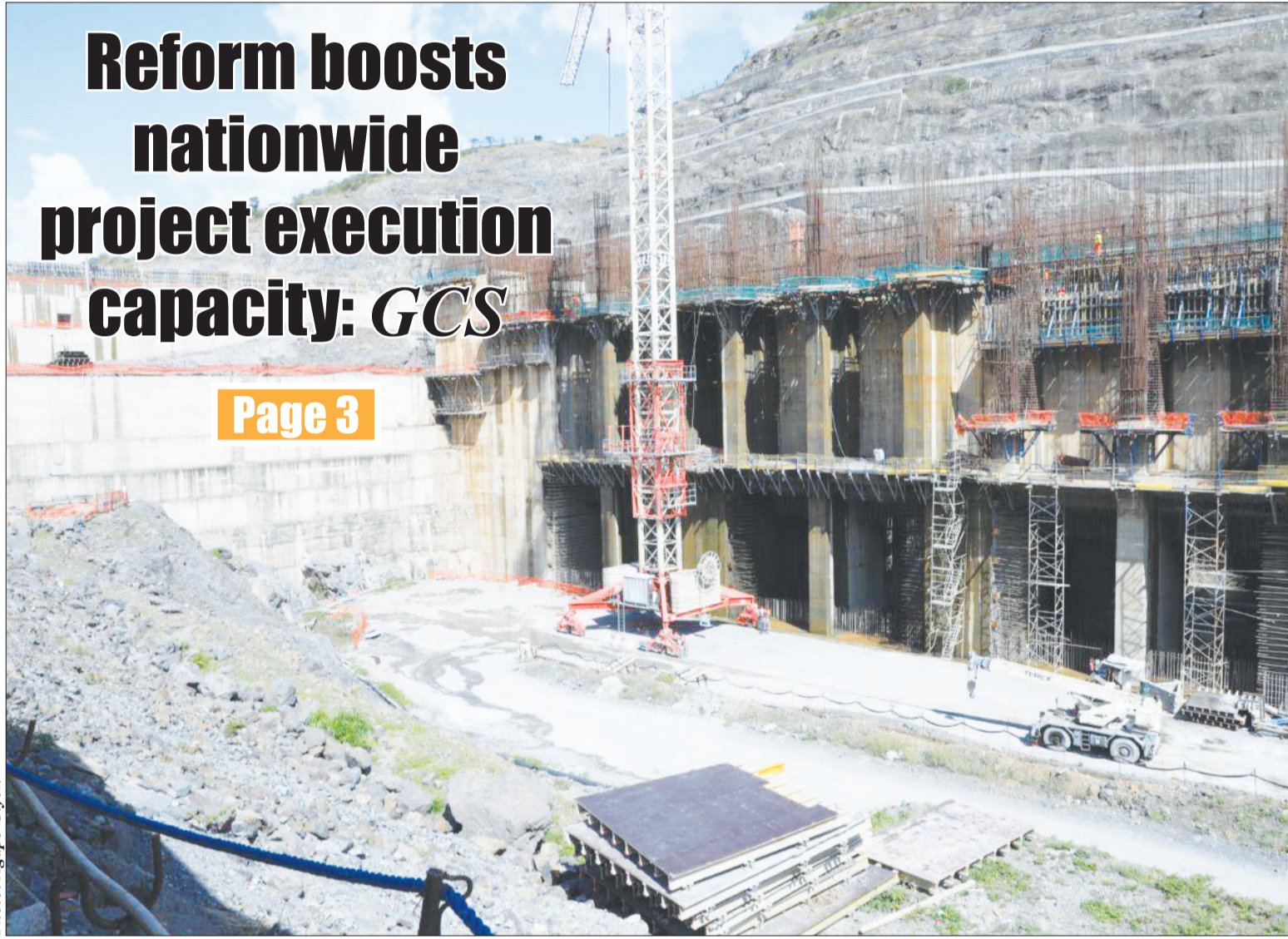
The Ethiopian Herald

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Reform boosts nationwide project execution capacity: GCS

Page 3

Photo: Agape Giyon

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U.S. lauds Ethiopia's transitional justice efforts

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA – The U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken applauded government's endeavor to ensure transitional justice in Ethiopia.

The Secretary held telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) on 28 September, about security challenges in the Horn of Africa and the shared goal of a

See U.S. lauds ... Page 3

Ethiopian heritages under UNESCO inspiring tourism revolution

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

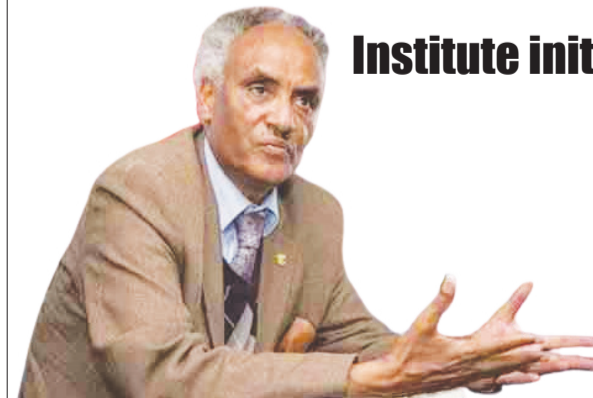
When United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) enlisted 12 heritages in its first version sites in 1978, Ethiopia was amongst the seven countries including Canada, the U.S., Senegal, among others, which inscribed two heritages. In fact, the world heritages list has over 1,000 sites across the world now.

Of the 195 United Nations member states, about 168 member states have so far



See Ethiopian heritages ... Page 3

Institute initiates research undertakings to support homegrown economic reform



BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Policy Studies Institute (PSI) announced that it has prepared to conduct researches intended to support the second phase of Ethiopia's Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda which would be implemented from 2024 to 2026.

Approached by Ethiopian Press Agency, PSI Director General Prof. Beyene Petros said that the ongoing homegrown economic reform needs scientific supports from research institutions so that PSI is now initiating supportive researches on major economic reform areas.

Accordingly, researches aimed at assessing challenges and prospects of the ongoing economic reform are being

See Institute initiates ... Page 3

News



Gari-Woro New Year reproduces peace, forgiveness

• Boro Shinasha People mark New Year

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA—Benishangul Gumuz Communication Affairs Bureau stated that Gari-Woro New Year festival of Boro Shinasha people is the means of peace, dialogue resolution, reconciliation, and keeping brotherhood.

Speaking at the Boro Shinasha people New Year celebration on Thursday, Benishangul Gumuz State Council Chief Speaker Temesgen Desisa (PhD) said that the “Gari-Woro” festival of the Boro Shinasha people was celebrated

with various events under the theme, “Gari-Woro for forgiveness, solidarity and peace.”

Temesgen also said that Gari-Woro festival for the people of Boro Shinasha has many advantages as it is quite important for the generations to come and nation building. Therefore, when celebrating the festival, the peace achieved in the state should be further strengthened through dialogue and reconciliation, strengthening the existing brotherhood and solidarity.

Local media reports have also confirmed that various elderly people express the meaning

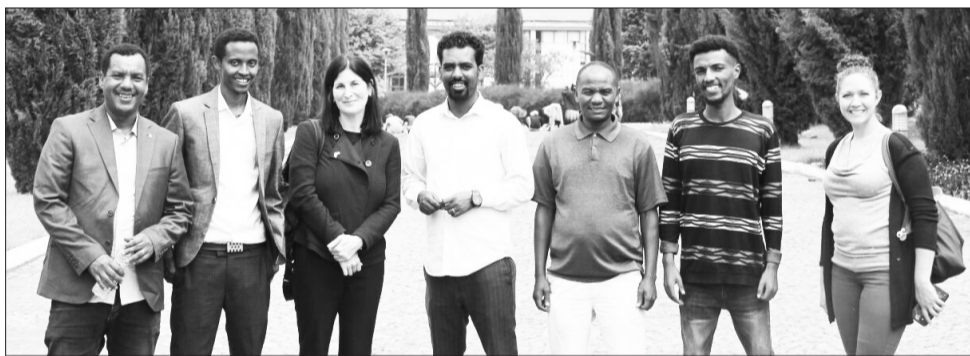
and importance of the Gari –Woro Boro Shinasha New Year. For instance, having a stay with ENA, Elder Lema Alga said it is impossible to move into the New Year with a grudge against the nation. Before the plan for New Year is prepared, if there is a dispute, reconciliation should be sought and then the elders bless those who have had reservations.

Another Elder, Asefa Taye on his part said that disputes should be resolved through dialogue and respecting differences and he always strives to play his part in that regard.

Furthermore, the elders stated that apart from

preserving the nation’s culture and passing it on to the next generation and especially the youth, strengthening unity and solidarity using their being opinion leaders. Among Boro Shinasha nation, the people have celebrated the Gari –Woro and Meskel (The Finding of The True Cross) festive.

It is to be recalled that “Gari-Woro” is a traditional turn of the year and it is celebrated with various events as of the Eve of the New Year till the finding of the true Cross Festival. The festive is the symbol of forgiveness, unity, understanding, love, and peace.



Embassy organizes workshop on investigative journalism

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA - The U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia has organized a workshop on investigative journalism for journalists and students in a bid to support media professionals.

The workshop facilitated focusing on investigative journalism, fact-checking, and mis/disinformation encouraged participants to share their own experiences and challenges in the sector.

As part of its continued engagement with and support for Ethiopian media professionals, the U.S. Embassy sponsored award-winning writer, director, and producer Lara Stolman for workshops for journalists and students of journalism in Addis Ababa and Hawassa.

Focusing on Participants discussed how to customize Lara’s international investigative reporting experience to the local situation and questioned how to create a favorable environment and protect journalists while conducting investigative reporting, it stated.

Lara also visited media organizations and journalism schools in Addis Ababa and Hawassa to better understand the media environment in the country. During her presentations, she explained that journalists working on investigative reporting need support from various stakeholders, particularly from media organizations, to maintain professional excellence in their work.

Lara emphasized that the need for more time to work on investigative stories in order to develop deeper knowledge of the topic and gain access to a range of sources. The significance of in-depth research and sustained inquiry in addition to being transparent and straightforward in interviews, she highlighted.

The U.S. Embassy supports a range of in-person and virtual workshops, seminars, and exchanges locally and in the United States as part of its active engagement on press freedom, investigative journalism, mis/disinformation to help expand the expertise of the nation’s media professionals, it was learnt.

Hospital stepping up to preserve nation’s medical history

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA- In a significant step towards preserving Ethiopia’s medical history, Alert Comprehensive Specialized Hospital convened a fruitful discussion forum with the Japanese Sasakawa Health Foundation on September 27, 2023.

As to the press release sent to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), the focus of the dialogue was renovation of the Princess Zenbework Memorial Hospital, with the goal of transforming it into a National Leprosy Museum.

While welcoming the attendees Shimeles Gezahegne (MD), the General Manager of the hospital, emphasized the importance of maintaining the historical significance of the hospital by converting it into an international museum post-renovation.

He indicated that the hospital is actively engaging in conversations with different countries to ensure that the old Princess Zenbework Memorial Building becomes a National Leprosy Museum while preserving its rich history and heritage.

Prof. Afework Kasu, Executive Director of the Armauer Hansen Research Institute, highlighted institution’s long-standing commitment to providing essential services to the community through training, medical services, and research.

Establishing a medical museum is a vital endeavor that underscores the institution’s dedication to the community, he stressed.



Mesele Terecha (MD) played a pivotal role in the discussions, shedding light on the hospital’s historical roots, the vision for the museum, and the importance of preserving its contents during the renovation process.

The Sasakawa Health Foundation’s leaders and managers raised pertinent questions about the hospital’s future and its continued significance, it was stated.

As the next step in this transformative project, a proposal will be developed and submitted by the hospital. Similarly, the Sasakawa Health Foundation has expressed its willingness to provide assistance, marking a promising partnership aimed at safeguarding the legacy and heritage of the Princess Zenbework Memorial Hospital.

Key participants of the discussion included representatives from various leprosy associations, the director-general of the Armauer Hansen Research Institute, as well as department heads and leaders, it was learnt.

News

Reform boosts nationwide project execution capacity: GCS

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

KONTA – Reform measures taken by the incumbent enabled the country to witness effective execution of existing and new developments projects, stated Government Communication Service (GCS).

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald* Government Communication Service State Minister Selamawit Kassa said that the national reform rescued various mega projects by addressing their specific problems.

“Our mega projects that were in trouble due to various challenges before the reform are now witnessing a remarkable progress,” she said.

According to the State Minister, several economic reforms have been implemented to improve project execution capacity of the country.

And the reform is paying back since mega projects like the Koysha and the Abbay hydroelectric dams are progressing well to give impetus to country’s economy either through providing energy to industries or



Selamawit Kassa

electrifying millions of households, she noted.

When the two mega projects go operational, they will generate close to 7,000 MW hydropower that lights the houses of millions of citizens and boom the investment, she underlined.

On the other hand, the mega projects are intertwined with tourism activities, Selamawit said, adding that both projects for example are being developed in a way that attracts more visitors.

The environment in which Koysha hydropower plant being constructed is rich in fauna and flora so that constitutes a huge concentration of elephants, lions, indigenous birds, plants, and other wildlife as well, the state minister mentioned.

This project is highly intertwined with Chebera Churchura Park, which is part of the three major tourism attraction projects designed Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), she stated.

Moreover the Artificial Lakes that will be created by both Koysha and Abbay dam will be another tourism sites for their magnificent sceneries, she underscored.

Meanwhile, the projects also created permanent and temporary jobs to citizens in addition to roads and other facilities constructed while the projects are being built. This inspires the surrounding community to protect the projects as its own, Selamawit indicated.

The construction of Koysha hydroelectric dam – an eco-friendly project being constructed alongside of the Omo River has reached 61 % completion while creating 5,000 jobs so far, it was learnt.

U.S. lauds ...

unified, peaceful and prosperous Ethiopia.

The information obtained from the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia indicated that Blinken has expressed his country’s appreciation on the ongoing work to establish a genuine, credible, and inclusive transitional justice process in Ethiopia.

The two also have discussed improved humanitarian oversight to allow for the resumption of food assistance.

Secretary Blinken underscored the need to promote peaceful resolution of political dialogue and protection of human rights to manage the situations in the Amhara and Oromia States.

In the meantime, the government is working on peace building and reconciliation in the country through applying transitional justice, it was learnt.

Recently, the Transitional Justice Expert Group disclosed that it is finalizing the last stage of input gathering for the national transitional justice policy.

The Transitional Justice Expert Group Coordinator Tadesse Kassa told local news outlets that policy inputs have been gathered from a wide range of stakeholders, including victims of human rights violations, civil society organizations, government officials, and academics.

The framework will be based on international experiences and will be tailored to the specific needs of Ethiopia, he noted.

The government is making a comprehensive and inclusive transitional justice policy that will provide a roadmap for Ethiopia’s transitional justice process which is designed for addressing human rights violations and building a more just and peaceful society.

Ethiopian heritages under UNESCO ...

inscribed several heritages under UNESCO. As one of the member states, Ethiopia, starting from the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, to the recently inscribed Gedeo Cultural Landscape, has inscribed about 11 tangible heritages.

Thus, Ethiopia is the leading African country followed by South Africa, as well as Egypt, Kenya and Senegal on the third rank by registering different tangible and intangible heritages. Travel Journalist, Henok Seyoum commended that the country has registered several tangible and intangible heritages as world heritages.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Henok reiterated that the efforts geared towards registering the fortified historic town of Harar, Konso and Gedeo Cultural Landscapes, Bale Mountains National park, among others, was exceptional regardless of the gaps witnessed in the sector.

Emphasizing that the nation has immense potential of tourism, he said the nation could highly benefit as well as attract number of tourists to the country through tapping its natural resources effectively.

Nonetheless, he stressed that much effort should be exerted in promoting the inscribed heritages to the rest of the world. Developing infrastructure of tourists’ sites, creating employment opportunities and promoting activities should be given due emphasis by concerned institution, as to him.

“Not only do tourist destinations have poor infrastructure, but they are also short of adequate accommodation to satisfy tourists and it remains to be a challenge.” Similarly, promotion activities have been neglected to the point where few tourists attractions such as lower Awash valley and lower valley of the Omo, and Tiya archaeological site only



been visited by tourists that happen to learn about the sites from senior international authors.

It has only been three to four years that the nation has started paying special attention towards the tourism sector. Unfortunately, the sector’s economic importance was underrated. Had it not been to the little attention given to it, the nation could have achieved more from the sector.

However, the tourist destinations built under the initiative of the Prime Minister through Gebeta LeHager, Gebeta LeTewilid, as well as Gebeta LeSheger have had undeniable importance in enhancing the sector. Thus, each concerned body at all levels should feel responsible in expanding such destinations.

In this regard, he suggested that priority should be given to promoting sustainable tourism through incorporating the society. Implementing different ecotourism directions is another area that the Travel Journalist commended.

In the same manner, he underlined that the private sector should be encouraged to contribute their share along with the government for the betterment of the tourism sector.

Besides, for developing the infrastructure of those enlisted heritage sites, similar attention should go to preserving the resources so as to attract more tourists, create jobs thereby making Ethiopia Africa’s leading tourism hub, he stressed.

Institute initiates ...

conducted. Currently, the institute conducts researches on inflation, unemployment, and climate issues, he mentioned.

“We are following the execution of the first phase Homegrown Economic Reform which would be completed within a year.” Platforms to monitor and evaluate outcomes have been created so as to submit recommendations to pertinent bodies, he said.

According to Prof. Beyene, the institute is working to avoid mistakes by drawing lessons from the challenges that have seen during the implementation period of the ongoing Homegrown Economic Reform.

Enduring the involvement of private sectors in the economy, resolving the soaring inflation, catalyzing investment and building green and resilient economy are major aims of the reform, he stated.

Moreover, the institute has many more active projects that evaluate the effectiveness of policies, the Director General disclosed.

“Government policies always need evaluation. The task which we are assigned is also to evaluate the effectiveness of active policies,” he remarked.

The Second Phase of Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda would be implemented from 2024 to 2026.

Opinion

Cyber diplomacy to protect Ethiopia's cyber space resources, technology

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

As the world is bracing to mark International Week of Diplomacy, cyber diplomacy and global cooperation to safeguard cyber space resources and technology has become more evident. Ethiopia is already steadily active in digitalizing her entire economic development and is far more concerned about the issue as the nation has been a victim of cyber-attacks over the last several years. In 2023 alone; Ethiopia witnessed about 18,000 verified attacks and 30,000 ransomware. This is a big jump compared to 5586 cyber-attacks reported in 2021/2022.

What therefore is cyber diplomacy and how does it relate to Ethiopia's current and future socio-economic development?

Cyber diplomacy is the art, the science, and the means by which nations, groups, or individuals conduct their affairs in cyberspace, in ways to safeguard their interests and promote their political, economic, cultural or scientific relations, while maintaining peaceful relationships.

Cyber diplomacy involves the use of diplomatic tools and initiatives to achieve objectives in the complex and continuously evolving uncharted territory of cyberspace, as described in the national strategy for cyberspace. States use the shared and accepted rules, protocols, and behaviors, to facilitate interactions between global actors of the public and the private sector.

A nine month performance report issued by the Information Network Security Administration of Ethiopia (INSA) has saved over 19 billion Birr in cyber-attack prevention in the last nine months of the 2022/23 fiscal year.

Solomon Soka, the Director General of the Information Network Security Administration, explained at the press conference the nine-month plan implementation report for the 2022/23 fiscal year.

The Director General gave a detailed explanation based mainly on cyber security vulnerability, cyber security threat, cyber-attack targeted institutions, and control of information and communication technologies.

Solomon Soka mentioned that INSA responded to 4422 cyber-attacks and attempted attacks in the country during the last nine months of the 2022/23 budget year. Some 4,272 of them responded, and 150 caused damage.

In addition, he added that the Administration achieved 94.86 percent of the performance in countering cyber-attack attempts in the last nine months.

Were that cyber-attack attempts succeeded, distributed denial-of-service for a certain period and loss of revenue, preventing operations, theft, and loss of data, hiding/encrypting data and claim money to retrieve and fraud communication channels to generate

income illegally would have happened, explained the chief Director General.

The Director General stated that most of the institutions targeted by cyber-attackers were financial institutions, security institutions, media institutions, key government institutions, ministries, regional offices, hospitals, and higher education institutions.

The director general explained the types and targets of cyber-attacks in the last nine months. More frequently attempted cyber-attacks were Website attacks, Malware, Infrastructure Scans, Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS), and Infiltration.

In a vulnerability survey conducted in some 80 institutions from various sectors (34 government and 46 private), some 486 cyber-attack risk vulnerabilities were found in a website, network infrastructure, and mobile applications. Some 129 were high-risk, 217 were medium, and 140 were low-risk.

Solomon announced that 3123 various information and communication technology equipment were requested to import, but INSA denied permission to some 453 of them since they were risky for national security.

In general, the Administration managed to reduce cyber security risks and vulnerability focus on four sectors (media institutions, health institutions, national security institutions, and infrastructure development) that indicate the level of national cyber security risk, Solomon stated.

According to the director general, INSA has prevented cyber-attacks, countered attacks, controlled technologies, suppressed dangerous security threats, and saved potential national damage. Finally, the Information Network Security Administration will strengthen its work to ensure our country's digital sovereignty and protect our national interests in cyberspace.

Here it is important to clearly pin point where cyber diplomacy sets the overall digital and cyber wellbeing of Ethiopia. In a digitally networked world, the importance of cyber diplomacy becomes even more important and deeply relevant as it is closely connected with the statehood, sovereignty, territorial integrity and peace of the country.

A person with a reasonable mindset would recall the extent to which the country has continued to be attacked by digital media outlets, direct cyber-attacks and illegal financial transactions that have continued to try to decapitate the national economy of the country. The misinformation campaign and foreign media reports ridden with total falsehood add up on the cyber-attacks that have continued to be waged on the country particularly over the last five years. Even the minimum damage that is hurdled on the country will certainly have more economic consequences on the national economy of Ethiopia.

What are the major strategies that Ethiopia has employed in utilizing cyber diplomacy to

ascertain the sovereignty, territorial integrity, peace and statehood of the country?

Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on Cooperation in Ensuring International Information Security (IIS). The document was signed on the sidelines of the Second Russia-Africa Summit on July 28, 2023 in St. Petersburg.

Ethiopia is working both at the level of the AU and also with China in the context of China Global Security Initiative. Moreover, INSA has entered into agreement with Intel Corporation as part of the modernization effort of the Agency.

As part of the modernization program at policy level, INSA introduced a technical document 2016 entitled "Critical Cyber Security Standard Version 2" in which general ICT standards were identified to be used by all stakeholders engaged in the utilization of ICT outputs. In 2016, the HPR enacted a proclamation on Computer Crimes.

The issue at point now is what is to be done to ensure both strong cyber diplomacy and internal security both in international cooperation and local performance.

At the national level, all institutions, public or private, need to come up with their own ICT policies and strategies which are compatible with global and INSA standards to protect all their ICT outputs including their software and hardware equipment. They need to have a modern ICT department which coordinates monitors and evaluates the safety and security of their computer networks and systems. This is of critical importance for smooth and safe operation of their information system.

As stated above, as cyber-attacks have no boundaries, Ethiopia needs to further expand her international cooperation to have access to new technologies that can help her develop a national capacity to repulse any level of cyber-attack from anywhere in the world. This implies producing well trained experts in cyber technology and knowhow through international cooperation with institutes and companies that work on cyber space and technologies.

ICT is a technology which is quickly updated over time and in different sectors. Adapting ICT technologies with the development needs of the country and utilizing web based knowledge and experience from partner countries for the modernization of national ICT outputs will help to markedly reduce the vulnerability of the country to sudden cyber-attacks.

Ethiopian public and private universities and specialized research centers can network with universities and specialized UN agencies that focus on security related aspects of cyber space and related issues to build their own capacity and also help to produce highly qualified experts on ICT and computer science.

Digitalization is an ever growing phenomenon that is entering into every facet of human life. It is already developed into the health, education, science and technology, tourism and hospitality as well as other sectors across the world. Ethiopia, therefore, needs to move faster to keep in pace with the rest of the world and to ensure her own sustainable socio-economic development.

Now both at the national and international level, there is a growing need for specialization in every aspect of digital technologies that could be utilized to successfully repulse cyber-attacks.

Building the capacity of all actors in the field of ICT through efforts to be made through diplomatic channels could be used as a strategy to further expand the social base of the national efforts to identify and fight off cyber-attacks that continue to appear.

Cyber diplomacy could be used to protect the country from foreign media interference and campaign of misinformation against the country by orienting and building the capacity of mainstream media outlets on the menace of cyber-attacks on both the content and technical capacity of their operations.

Finance and banking systems in the country are in most cases targeted by those who are out to disrupt online financial systems of the institutions in the country. These institutions need to continue to aware their customers on the danger of cyber-attacks.

The attacks that the perpetrators launch on health institutions including hospitals are even more dangerous as it puts the lives of thousands of people at risk. Special trainings need to be provided for health care providers who heavily depend on online services and online treatment systems.

Cyber diplomacy as explained earlier is not the sole prerogative of diplomats or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as all institutions using computers and online services are affected.

As noted earlier, the government needs to enforce the preparation and implementation of ICT policy in all governmental and private institutions to ensure that accountability in protecting their data and operations systems will be in place.

On the other hand, the government and all stakeholders need to pull their human and material resources to enable courts of law across the country to ensure justices on issues related to cyber-crimes and computer related crimes. This should also be supplemented with the preparation of a national quality and standards on computers locally assembled or imported from overseas.

Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald

Editorial

Opinion

Peaceful celebrations showcase the existing norm

Ethiopians, following their New Year celebration, attend a number of outdoor festivals that include; Mawlid (the birthday of Prophet Mohammed), Demera or Bone Fire conducted at the eve of Meskel, Irreechaa (the thanks giving of the Oromo people) and New Year celebrations of different ethnic groups of Ethiopia among others.

These celebrations, by nature, invite peoples' gathering from all kinds of lives and places so that the peaceful accomplishment is put under question at times as seen in the past. Among the reasons for not concluding in peace is politicizing of the festivals by some groups. Because of this, some disgusting events were reported in the past years.

This year, however, thanks to the peace loving Ethiopians and the security forces, the past festivals; Mawlid, Demera and Meskel were celebrated in peace. This circumstance bears witness that Ethiopians, from whatever background they are, can manage any outdoor celebration in peace.

The Demera or Bone Fire usually accommodates hundreds of thousands of people from different corners of Addis Ababa and even from the overseas. Its peaceful accomplishment testifies that Irreechaa, to be marked next week in Addis Ababa and Bishoftu will be held in peace.

The peaceful celebration of these festivals generates from the nature of the festivals since they are more of religious and cultural. The peoples gathered at the events have in mind the values of the celebrations in bringing them closer to God and social interactions with their fellow human beings.

'Mawlid' also commonly known as 'Milad un Nabi', is observed as a public holiday in many countries, including Ethiopia with a large Muslim population as it commemorates the anniversary of the birth of the founder of Islam and the proclaimer of the Qur'an.

Around the Islamic world, Muhammad's birthday is celebrated with religious lectures and recitals of verses from the Qur'an, in mosques decorated with lights to mark the occasion.

This year's 'Mawlid' celebration in Ethiopia falls on the same day with the Christian Demera festival and both marked in peace.

Meskel is an annual festival commemorating the finding of the true cross of Jesus Christ, observed primarily on September 27 or 28 of Leap Year as a religious and cultural celebration among Millions of people in Ethiopia.

A person who attended the festival said; "To preach unity, there is no better alternative than the Meskel holiday. The church mainly teaches peace and unity,"

One Orthodox priest attending the celebrations in the capital said the power of Christianity was to reunite Ethiopians. "It helps us to forget those differences that have shaped us for so many years and brought us to these conflicts, wars, hates and yeah, atrocities as you know," he said.

Irreechaa is based on the traditional thanksgiving event to the Waka or Wakayo who is believed to create the heavens and the earth. The Oromos thank the Waka for good harvest, livestock health and peace among other things in their communities.

Irreechaa is not only celebrated to thank God but also to welcome the new season of plentiful harvests after the dark and rainy winter season.

Thus, for the majority of the people, it is unthinkable to engage in any kind of violence because any quarrel related to these festivals disturbs their spirit and takes away their mental peace that resulted in guilty conscious.

Those who want to create chaos, thus, could not get entry as the security system is well organized, informed and responsible to make the celebrations conducted in peace.

Call for a "fairer world" falling on listening ears

BY WORKU BELACHEW

Leaders of developing countries have echoed their most pressing concerns in their speeches at the UN General Assembly 2023 held in New York. The centerpiece of the arguments that they have made perhaps abridged as: "We, developing countries, have faded up with the current exploitative international system". The leaders once again bring the urgency of creating a fairer global system before the August international body, the UN.

In his speech, Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Demeke Mekonnen had this to tell to the assembly: "We call for a more inclusive and effective multilateral mechanism that works fairly for developing countries."

He hailed the BRICS for championing the call. "Ethiopia is grateful to have been invited to join the group."

Unless the world heeds the voices of the developing countries, the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals itself will be a far cry from being successful.

Africa, for instance, a continent dubbed the "treasure chest of the world", has not been able to utilize its resources to create jobs for its bulging youth population.

Diametrically opposite to the continent's potential, the productive youth population marches in droves to their death in an attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has called the Central Mediterranean Sea as the deadliest first quarter on record since 2017. It says over 400 migrants died only between January and March of 2023. The April 2023 report further unveils the fact that over 31, 000 migrants arrived in Italy over the preceding months of the year. Most reports show that the majority of migrants originate from the Sub-Saharan Africa.

Politicians and scholars alike have, therefore, pin hopes on reinforcing multilateral bodies. And emerging blocs such as the BRICS would add a catalytic element to accelerate the sought-after reforms thereby tackling the grim scenario befallen the developing states.

Over 40 countries had submitted official requests to join BRICS. Countries including Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia, Venezuela, Vietnam, Cuba, Honduras, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Morocco, Nigeria, the State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Ethiopia had expressed their interests formally ahead of the August 2023 summit.

It seems that the bloc wants to better represent developing countries drawing members from each and every region and sub-region. Africa has three representatives in the bloc, South Africa, Ethiopia and Egypt. India, China and Russia are generally from Asia while Saudi Arabia, Iran and the UAE from Middle East Asia. Latin America's interests and benefits could be reflected through Argentina and Brazil.

BRICS will represent 30 % of the World's Population and 47 % of the global population with the new membership taking effect as of January 1st, 2024, reports show.

The Ethiopian context

Despite the undesirable ramifications of the global pandemic and the two-year war in its north, not to mention lingering skirmishes in some parts, Ethiopia's geo-political location, the over 110 million population, and its resilient economy have made the country join the BRICS. IMF 2023 forecast for Ethiopia shows that real GDP will grow by 6.1 % as well.

Clean energy and water supplies, including a relatively low cost as compared to other areas, over 53 million active labor forces, strategic location to the Middle East, Europe as well as Asia, Ethio-Djibouti electric powered railway, wide-ranging incentive packages, inter alia, placed Ethiopia

among the top FDI destinations in Africa.

The BRICS + countries would seize these opportunities to expand their investment. And access to finance from New Development Bank (NDB) and maybe the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) would further augment doing business among themselves.

For Ethiopia, a country that has already time-tested ties with both the BRICS and BRICS+ countries, the blessings coming from the new horizon is immense. At current, the bilateral trading between Ethiopia and members of the BRICS is not that significant, or the balance is skewed towards partners.

One of the most important trade and investment partners of Ethiopia is China. The latter does business with Ethiopia worth in billions. Pertinent information shows that currently Ethiopia-China bilateral trade volume, in 2022 for instance, strikes at USD 2.67 billion. As of the end of 2022, the Chinese investment stock in Ethiopia stands at USD 3.257 billion. It is highly likely for this to expand more and more, per the information from the Chinese Embassy in Addis.

If we take Ethiopia-India bilateral trade, India's export to Ethiopia is worth 2,758, 000, 000 USD. The country's import from Ethiopia's market is 84,000,000 USD, per the information obtained from the Indian Embassy in Ethiopia.

More than 650 Indian companies are registered and as per the estimate, their cumulative investment is worth 5 billion USD. Areas they are engaging in include but are not limited to Plastic, Steel, Pharma, Textile, Vehicle assembling, Paper and Printing, Tanneries (Leather Processing), Meat production, Jute Bags, Cencent/PP Bags, Shoes, Transformers, Horticulture, Floriculture and ICT.

Ethiopia's trade and investment relations with the other BRICS member, Russia, are making steady growth. Russia's trade turnover with Ethiopia shows a 68.2 % decline in 2022, when compared to the preceding 2021. This is due to the reduction in the volume of Russian supplies. The volume falls from 225.2 million USD in 2021 to 71.7 million USD in 2022. On the flipside, Ethiopia's imports increased by 18 % from 30.5 million USD to 36 million USD. Coffee supply is responsible for the expansion of the volume. It progressed from 20.7 million USD to 27.9 million USD.

Yet, the bilateral trade is peaking steadily between the months of January and April 2023 as compared to the same period of last year. The volume is said to have upped by 56 % from 10 million USD to 15.6 million USD. Russian export to Ethiopia has grown by more than double to 3.3 million USD. Its import is raised to 12.3 million USD from the previous 8.5 million marking a 44.7 % increment.

Though the figures are not that significant, Ethiopia does business with almost all BRICS+ members, in the service sector, for instance, *Ethiopian* flies to all the countries. Still, Ethiopia has a vast potential to lure more BRICS+ investment and to stand being one of the most competitive trading partners to the bloc. There are striking facts which have already shown that Ethiopia could achieve economic miracles.

Global Chairman Fairfax Africa Fund Zemedeneh Nigatu subscribes the fact that Ethiopia's economy is one of the resilient ones. He said that despite COVID 19, Ukraine-Russia conflict, and other internal issues, IMF forecast the country's economy to hit 6.1 % in 2023, a figure that represents one of the fastest five largest economies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In a nutshell, Ethiopia's entrance to the bloc is highly likely to increase the bloc's strength. No shred of doubt, Ethiopia is a gateway to the rest of Africa. Hence, BRICS influence in all respects, from investment, trade to international politics will get a further traction.

The expansion of the BRICS grouping has clearly shown the birth of a new era in our world. In one hand, developing countries would use their collective strength to get the work of creating a fairer global system done sooner than later as it has been clearly observed in the recent UNGA 2023.

Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald



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The Ethiopian Herald

Art & Culture

Bale Mountains National Park named world heritage site

BY MULUGEA GUDETA

A new holiday season has dawned on us with the advent of the new Ethiopian year which is less a month young now. The new season is not only a season of blooming yellow carnations, sunshine and a feeling of respite from the cold and rain of the last three months. It is also a season of major celebrations with Ireechaa, Meskel and Timket knocking on the doors again, for colorful celebrations with traditional songs and dances.

This is also a season of fashion as designers and clothes makers are busy looking for new ideas for their new creations. It is also the season when young and old start to prepare for the season that herald new hopes despite the difficult times. As a matter of coincidence the New Year has also ushered in new opportunities for the country with the Bale Mountains designated as natural heritage site. This augurs well both for tourism in the coming months and years.

Last week, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) gave the amazing Bale Mountain sites the recognition they deserve although it came a little bit late. The campaign for getting the Bale Mountains registered as world heritage sites started a long time ago. This is not the first time that Ethiopia is recognize as the location of one of the most terrific mountain sceneries where exotic animals and plants are found. The Semien Mountains National Park is one of them.

Ethiopia has already has nine registered world heritage sites, including Fassil Ghebbi which is found in Gondar region, Tiya in Soddo, south of Addis Ababa, Lower Valley of the Omo which is a prehistoric site near Lake Turkana, the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, some 645km north of Addis Ababa, Lower Valley of the Awash, Harar Jegol, the fortified historic town, Axum in Tigray and Konso cultural landscape.

Compared to other African countries, Ethiopia stands second after South Africa in the number of its heritage sites. South Africa has ten heritage sites followed by Ethiopia and Morocco that have nine heritage sites and Algeria, Egypt, Senegal and Tanzania stand seventh. Globally, Italy is the country with most heritage sites numbering 58. Ethiopia on the other hand is considered the most historical country in the world. "Ethiopia is home to some of the oldest recorded human history on Earth. In the 1970s the fossils of an upright walking ape was discovered here, dating back to 3.5 million years ago."

UNESCO has been active in Ethiopia for many decades now and its mission is defined as being, "to contribute to sustainable human development in a culture of peace underpinned by tolerance, democracy and human rights through programs and projects in UNESCO's field of competence Education, Natural Sciences, Human and Social Sciences, Culture and

The Bale National Park has earned the distinction of becoming one of the must go areas in the world has significant impact on the tourism sector

Communication, among others."

UNESCO has also been active in promoting protecting and giving recognition to the world's natural heritage sites. "Natural heritages refer to natural features, geological and physiological formations, and delineated areas that constitute the habitats of threatened species of animals and plants and natural sites of value from the point of view of science, conservation and natural beauty."

The Semien natural park is the only natural heritage site in Ethiopia which was registered 1978. "The Semien national park is, "a national park that that serves as a refuge for many endangered species, including the Walia Ibex, and Ethiopian wolf. The park was recognized as a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1978 and was

included in the list of world heritage sites in danger in 1996." Examples of natural heritages include, "plants, landscapes, forests, natural falls, caves and animals and rivers"

How are natural heritage sites selected for protection? According to available information, "If an area contains rare natural formations, like unique rock shapes or is very beautiful, or has habitats and species of animals and plants, that can only exist there, it becomes important to protect it. This also makes it possible world heritage site." There is a tendency to confuse natural and cultural sites but the two are different. Natural heritage include forests, rivers, and animals whereas cultural heritages consist of temples, painting and artifacts among others.

The Bale Mountains National Park is now included in the UNESCO world heritage site list. "The new UNESCO site dazzles with a range of otherworldly landscapes, and is also one of the Africa's most exiting yet quirky wildlife destinations." This is the second national park in Ethiopia to access the list of UNESCO's world heritage site. One may wonder what makes the Bale Mountains so special and the answer is that the mountains range is, "rising over 4000 meters, the Alpine plateau of the Bale Mountains is the highest mountain area in southern Ethiopia."

The Bale Mountains National Parks are a habitat for 20 endemic mammals, not to mention dozens of reptiles and amphibians and hundreds of bird species. "Other wildlife often spotted in the park includes the Menelik Bushback, grey duiker, warthog, African golden wolf, colobus monkey and spotted hyena."

The fact that the Bale National Park has earned the distinction of becoming one of the must go areas in the world has significant impact on the tourism sector as an increasing number of visitors are expected to visit the place thereby contributing to the revival of the economy of the surrounding areas. It is now up to the tourism authorities to put in place the necessary infrastructure and accommodations to make the most out of the new status of the Bale Mountains as tourism destination.

Recently, 13 new sites have been added to UNESCO's world heritage list which lost one site while three were placed on the danger list. The World Heritage Committee holding its 33rd session has inscribed two new natural sites and 11 cultural sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Ethiopia is still fighting to get other natural or cultural heritage sites to be registered so that they can enjoy protection by UNESCO. There is also what experts call tangible and intangible natural heritages. "Cultural heritage is a fairly broad term that can apply to both the tangible and intangible heritages such as stories, songs, and celebrations we experience in the moment." Ethiopia has applied for the recognition of Fiche

Chambalala, the New Year festival of the Sidama people. "

The other is Ireecha, is the thanksgiving festival of the Oromo people. According to information from Wikipedia, "Ireecha is thanksgiving holiday celebrating the end of winter in Oromia region of Ethiopia. The Oromo people celebrate Ireecha to thank Waaqa (God) for the blessings and mercies they have received throughout the previous year.

According to Wikipedia, "Gadaa is the indigenous democratic system of governance used by the Oromo people in Ethiopia and northern Kenya. It is also celebrated by the Konso and Gedeo people of southern Ethiopia. The system regulates political, economic, social and religious activities of the community." Because of its uniqueness and as an expression of universal human values, the Gada System has gained recognition by UNESCO and registered as intangible cultural heritage. "The Gada System, which is the social, political and cultural reflection of the traditional Oromo people was registered in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in October 2016"

The celebrations of Ireecha are a celebration of the people whose age-old cultural commitment to peace, abundance and gratitude finds expression every year here in Addis Ababa, also known as Finfinee in Afan Oromo. The celebrations are not confined to the Ethiopian capital but also reverberate throughout the Oromia region. Millions gather of ordinary people gather at specific places to connect with God as the true creator of abundance, peace and happiness.

Preparations for the annual celebrations start well before the advent of the New Ethiopian Year and gather momentum in the few weeks after New Year. People in towns and countryside prepare special clothing and other ritual instruments for the occasion. The big gathering centers for the celebrations are usually Finfinee and Bishoftu, two of the biggest traditional centers of Ireecha where people gather around lakes singing and dancing to the glory of their Waquaa or God.

Hopes for a better future of peace and abundance are on the lips of the millions of celebrants who travel hundreds of kilometers to join their compatriots in a collective expression of a festival that has been in place for the last hundreds of years and still continues to inspire new generations that have given the occasion a new and modern twist as reflected in the traditional garb,, the foods and drinks and the dances that continue well into the new year.

Of course in Bale where the Bale National Park is located, Ireechaa is going to assume a new dimension as it coincides with its inclusion on the UNESCO world heritage site, a big event of cultural significant to Ethiopia.

Law & Politics

IGAD's Youth Policy in promoting peace, stability and prosperity

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) decision to adopt the Youth Policy reflects its unwavering dedication to championing the rights and welfare of young people in the region. This policy serves as a comprehensive guide for member states urging them to prioritize equal opportunities and support for youth across all sectors.

It is common knowledge that IGAD is a regional organization in Africa that holds immense importance in promoting peace, stability, and development within the Horn of Africa region. The organization has come to acknowledge the critical role of youth empowerment and the necessity of prioritizing their rights and engagement.

By adopting this youth policy, IGAD is sending a clear message that they recognize the importance of creating an enabling environment for young people to thrive and contribute to the social, economic, and political development of the region. The organization understands that investing in the youth is crucial for long-term stability and sustainable growth in the area.

The adoption of the youth policy also highlights IGAD's commitment to promoting inclusivity and equal participation of young people in decision-making processes. The organization recognizes that young individuals have unique perspectives, fresh ideas, and innovative solutions that can contribute to the overall development and peace building efforts in the region.

The adoption of a youth policy recognizes the potential and importance of the youth population as a valuable resource. By focusing on the needs and aspirations of young people, IGAD can create an inclusive and participatory environment that empowers them to contribute meaningfully to society. This policy allows for the fostering of youth-led initiatives, promoting innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship, which are vital for economic growth and development.

In actual fact, the policy recognizes the need to enhance employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people. By creating an enabling environment for job creation and supporting youth-led businesses, it helps to reduce unemployment and foster economic growth. This not only promotes stability but also contributes to overall prosperity in the region. The adoption of Youth Policy by IGAD demonstrates its commitment to promoting the rights of young people and strengthening their engagement in all matters of the region.

IGAD's Youth Policy encourages the active participation of young people in peace building, conflict prevention, and resolution efforts. It acknowledges that young people have the potential to become agents of change and play a significant role in building peaceful and stable societies. By involving



youth in peace building initiatives, IGAD aims to foster a culture of non-violence and tolerance contributing to regional stability.

The development of a youth policy provides an opportunity to analyze and understand the unique needs and aspirations of young people within the region. It allows policymakers to identify the barriers and factors that hinder the social, economic, and political empowerment of youth. It also recognizes the importance of involving young people in decision-making processes at all levels.

A comprehensive youth policy has a transformative impact on the lives of young individuals by addressing their specific challenges and offering actionable strategies. This policy encompasses various dimensions including education, employment, health, participation, and social inclusion. By prioritizing these aspects, it paves the way for sustainable development and the realization of young people's full potential enabling them to become active and engaged members of society.

The policy also addresses issues of social inclusion, gender equality, cultural preservation, and the promotion of volunteerism and community service. By recognizing diversity, respecting human rights, and providing equal opportunities for all young people, irrespective of their backgrounds or identities, it is possible to establish an enabling environment that values the contributions of every individual.

Besides, the policy provides a platform for sharing best practices, exchanging experiences, and fostering collaboration across borders. This facilitates the creation of networks that can collectively address shared challenges, promote cultural exchange, and build bridges enhancing peace and stability within the region.

A well-designed youth policy takes into account the multifaceted nature of youth empowerment. It recognizes that young people are not a homogeneous group but come from diverse backgrounds, including

differences in gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and abilities. Therefore, a comprehensive youth policy integrates a range of approaches, initiatives, and programs that are responsive to the specific needs and circumstances of different groups of young people ensuring inclusivity and equal opportunities for all.

The adoption of a youth policy can help address social issues such as crime, violence, and radicalization. By engaging young people through positive programs and initiatives, IGAD can offer alternatives to negative influences and provide a sense of belonging and purpose. Creating platforms for youth dialogue, participation, and representation also allows their voices to be heard, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their communities and countries.

Participation and engagement of young people in decision-making processes and civic life are key components of a comprehensive youth policy. It recognizes the importance of youth voice in shaping policies and programs that directly affect them. The policy supports the establishment of youth councils, forums, and platforms where young people can actively participate, express their views, and contribute to decision-making at various levels.

To ensure the effective implementation of a youth policy, it is crucial to establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. These mechanisms enable regular assessments of progress and impact allowing policymakers to make evidence-based decisions and adjustments to programs and interventions as needed. Monitoring and evaluation also hold policymakers accountable ensuring that the commitments outlined in the policy are translated into meaningful actions on the ground.

A comprehensive youth policy is of utmost importance as it provides a vital roadmap and action plan to empower young individuals within a particular region. This policy recognizes and addresses the unique challenges faced by youth, and

offers actionable strategies to overcome these obstacles. By doing so, it ensures that the needs, rights, and aspirations of young people are effectively considered and integrated into policies and programs. This holistic approach promotes their overall well-being and enables them to contribute meaningfully to society.

By recognizing the potential of young people to contribute to peaceful societies, IGAD aims to involve them in conflict prevention, resolution, and reconciliation activities, fostering a sense of ownership and active citizenship among the youth.

The adoption of this youth policy serves as a reminder of IGAD's responsibility towards future generations. By prioritizing the needs and aspirations of young people, IGAD demonstrates its commitment to leaving a lasting legacy that ensures a better future for the region characterized by prosperity, peace, and stability.

The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has adopted Youth Policy with a view to promoting the rights of the youth and strengthens their engagement in all matters of the region, according to information obtained from Ethiopian News Agency.

IGAD held a landmark ministerial meeting towards the adoption of the IGAD Youth Policy in Kenya, Nairobi, on Wednesday.

It was indicated during the occasion that the IGAD Youth Policy is a crucial framework for promoting youth rights in the IGAD Region as it is designed to guide and mainstream youth priorities in policies, laws, and programmes aimed at empowering youth and ensuring their meaningful participation in political processes.

The policy is also believed to play crucial role for the development of a comprehensive roadmap and action plan to empower the youth in the region.

The policy has been developed through extensive consultations with Technical Experts responsible for Youth Affairs from member states, National Youth Councils, Youth-Led Organizations, and the IGAD Secretariat.

The ministers up on the conclusion of their meeting have issued a statement on the declaration of the adoption and implementation of IGAD Youth Policy Framework.

The ministers agreed to establish IGAD technical experts and ministerial committees on Youth Affairs as a platform to oversee, follow up, and periodically take stock of the progress of the implementation of the IGAD Youth Policy Framework.

They also called upon development partners, including the International Financial Institutions, to provide support to the IGAD Secretariat and its member states for operationalization of the IGAD Youth Policy Framework.

Chronic back pain is not getting attention it deserves!

Scientist Said Osman (MD)

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

Today's guest, Dr. Said Osman is an orthopedic spine surgeon. Though his families came from southern part of Ethiopia, he was born in border town called Moyale. By then, his father had been working for Kenya. He was raised in border area between Ethiopia and Kenya, however he did not worry about the boundary marked between the two countries.

He then went to school at Kenya side and went to Moyale Primary School, Marsabit Boys, Kang'aru High School and University of Nairobi. Dr. Osman obtained his Medical Degree with Honors from University of Nairobi, Kenya.

He went on to complete his Post-Doctoral Fellowship training in the United Kingdom at The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Scotland, where he graduated as Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in General Surgery. He then sub-specialized in Orthopedic Surgery and was honored as a Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in orthopedic surgery. Dr. Osman moved to the United States in 1992 as Spine Fellow at the University Hospitals of Cleveland.

Now, he permanently resides in Maryland, USA. He studied spine fellowship in Scotland, UK, but found the many problems associated with open surgery did not make sense for him to bring it home. Hence, he decided to explore the least traumatic, endoscopic surgical option, and that was what sent him to the USA.

Within three years as a Spine Fellow at the University Hospitals of Cleveland, Ohio, USA, with the support of Professor Marsolais, (M.D., PhD.) He developed three endoscopic spine techniques which are now being used routinely, worldwide. The only people who have not benefited so far are the ones for whom he decided to take this long and risky journey.

In the brief stay he had with the Ethiopian Herald, Dr. Said Osman told the cause, symptoms, treatments and socioeconomic impact of spine disease. Apart from treating patients, he conducts various researches in relation to spine surgery and has got international recognitions and patents. He would share us information about the spine surgery innovation, technology, statistics, and future plan to set up the Ethiopian Center of Excellence in Spine Care, which he want to share his experiences. Have a nice read!



You were born in border area of Ethiopia where there are various challenges and opportunities. Being born in border areas, How do you see it?

I think it is probably the best question anybody asked me. As a product of Ethiopia, Kenya whatever you want to call, my family is 100% Ethiopians and settle in the border. What is the experience I get from Moyale? When I was six years of age, my grandfather was a community leader in Moyale, Ethiopia. Emperor Hailesilassie recognized his contribution and gave him honorific title called Balambaras Wario Gobe. One day, there was a meeting between the British colony rulers on Moyale side and Ethiopian leaders of Moyale. The meeting is about cattle being stolen across the borders.

How to resolve all those things were the agenda of the meeting. They had a meeting outside our village in Kenya side. I was listening what they were talking about. My grandfather asked the British man various questions. How many times people from Ethiopian side invaded and stolen the cattle? How many cattle have been stolen? Was there any arrest? The British man did not have any answers. My grandfather was

laughing in every question.

The local leaders in Moyale, Kenya side are shaking. They were not supposed to clap for this white man. They simply said yes, yes. I was very nervous and asked my mother; why my grandfather was laughing at them. If you are not smart, he doesn't care to tell what he feels. That is the day when I feel, it is not the color of your skin that matters, it is what is in your brain. That is when I said well I can go anywhere as long as my brain.

People have the same culture of the border but one under colonial rule and the other independent and very proud of what they are. I am the pride of Ethiopian community benefiting from the British colony. I always walk from Kenya to the school in Ethiopia and my teacher bit me due to delay for schools. From that day on, I decided to study in Kenya. I had the opportunity to go to medical school. Benefiting both side earning so much. If I were from Kenya side, I did not have such experience. I learn good and bad from both sides.

You have made a lot of studies in spine surgery. How do you explain the achievement you recorded so far?

Depending on the condition being treated, endoscopic spine surgery cuts down operating time by 70-80%. This means less time under anesthesia, quicker recovery, and the opportunity to make the operating theatre available for another patient

Depending on the condition being treated, endoscopic spine surgery cuts down operating time by 70-80%. This means less time under anesthesia, quicker recovery, and the opportunity to make the operating theatre available for another patient.

Surgery involves about half-inch incision, no cutting muscles or bones, and minimal blood loss. This means the patient may be able to go home the same day, thus making the hospital bed available for another patient. Early return to productive life means security for patient's family. Because of minimal loss of blood, there is usually no need for blood transfusion unless there is an additional medical condition which necessitates transfusion. Because of minimal trauma, there is minimal risk of complications.

Complete set of "The Osman Approach" involves full range of care based on an integrated multi-specialty protocol to facilitate the delivery of an expeditious, value-based care. The treatment protocol of "The Osman Approach" is based on precise anatomic, MRI-based disease classification of the spinal condition which places the

Continued to Page 9



Chronic back pain is not getting ...

Continued from Page 8

patient on appropriate treatment protocol from day one! I developed and published the Classification.

I have invested a lot of time and money in developing multiple patents of biologic devices for disc replacement, vertebral replacement, various bone, and fixation of fractures, all without using metals. I hope to get them manufactured as Ethiopian products, in Ethiopia. If that becomes a reality, expect Medical Tourism from the West and the East coming to Ethiopia to benefit!

As a Diaspora, who spent more than 42 years out of home, what did you bring for your country?

Ethiopia has about 65 million people in the working age-group of 15-54-years. 46% (30 million) of them have chronic back pain which forces them to work few hours a day, few days per week, or not working at all, leading to 70% loss of their production capacity. This translates into 30 million people with a production capacity of only 9 million healthy workers. Furthermore, 1.5 million of the chronic back sufferers require surgery today, because all non-operative measures have failed. Consider the impact of all this on the patients, families, the nation and investors in Ethiopia's economy!

Chronic back pain does not get the attention it deserves! It progresses slowly and patients progressively adjust to its impact and because of lack of efficient technologic treatment, patients do not seek remedy until it becomes severely incapacitating. This means loss of good quality of life for years, loss of productivity to support families, and ultimately high expenses to the nation which must bear the burden of supporting them. The impact of chronic back pain may be much more severe than that of any regular epidemic, which gets immediate public attention.

I hope to set up the Institute of Advanced Endoscopic Spine Surgery (IAESS) in or near Addis Ababa. The Institute will provide treatment for patients and serve as a training center for spine surgeons, Pain Management providers, various Therapy specialists, nurses, etc. The emphasis will be on integrated, multispecialty services so that treatment will be efficient, and value based.

What is the significance of establishing a spine surgery center in Ethiopia? How it will be realized unless you get due support from local and international organizations?

The IAESS will serve as a hub of spine care for satellite institutions across Ethiopia and hopefully the African Continent. Once the initial phases of the IAESS are established, in response to the requests from multiple spine surgeons across Africa, I plan to establish the African Society of Advanced Spine Technologies – ASAST, which will



Chronic back pain does not get the attention it deserves! It progresses slowly and patients progressively adjust to its impact

be headquartered in Addis Ababa. The organization will be expected to quickly attract the attentions of international spine societies and industries because of its projected contribution to the spine care, globally.

The success of the project will be based, to a large extent, on my international profile as an innovator of modern spine technologies which I have shared in publications and conferences across the globe – USA, Canada, Germany, UK, Spain, Turkey, S.Korea, China, India, Brazil, Egypt, UAE.

In addition to clinical services, I hope to campaign for the establishment of the manufacturing capacity for biologic implants

for the various skeletal abnormalities including, but not limited to, physiologic disc replacement, artificial biologic vertebral implants, biologic artificial bones, and implants for fractures. None of these devices are available anywhere in the world because of 100% reliance on metal and plastics.

The success to develop the IAESS depends on investments in this technology by the local and/or international entities. I have been campaigning for resources to launch this project with minimal progress so far, but hopes are high.

Most of Ethiopian citizens studied in abroad and became a scientist. However,

they are facing various challenges in terms of getting advanced equipments to share their experiences to Ethiopian fellows. What sort of advice do you have for these professionals?

First of all what I want to tell my friends whom I met in the United States, Britain is one, it is perfect to learn a technology. The technology is not necessarily good as I explained to you. But the good things should stay in this place and what I tell to my friends is take the good things that you learn there, bring it home, take the good part of what we have here and combine the two. Here, you have got an Ethiopian product. When you come with that, you are not demanding some very high technology, start to bring here so that people can get benefit. It may be too expensive or it may be impractical to think about it. Pick something from US, bring and plant it in Ethiopia without change to it. That is what I have told everybody. This is my position. I have eight to nine patents that I have developed so that we can actually produce or manufacture devices to fix the problem in spine, broken bones and so on.

After you arrived here in Ethiopia, I am sure that you are sharing the experiences you developed so far to Ethiopian. How did you find them?

When I first came to ALERT hospital, the young neurosurgeons read a lot and said how can you do this surgery? After the first case was done without blood losses, the following day, they were eager to see that patient. They looked when the patient was walking around. There was no pain in his leg and this made them amazed. Surprisingly, the patient wanted to go home in the same day.

That is not a liquid lecturer or very fascinating videos and so on. It is a product. Whether it is a procedure or other, there is no 100 percent guarantee. There is always a risk. I told them to get all the scientific information and share it with the patient so that the patient at some point becomes part of the treatment team. As they do not rely on the MRI, if it is perfect, it is wonderful but you cannot feel it. So, that is why I said; even if everything looks perfect here, try something else.

Try injection to numb it and take away the pain. If it does, you are on the right track and that information comes from the patient when minimizing risk of error. That is a culture found nowhere. Those are the sacrifices made in a hostile environment. People were saying this guy is dangerous. It would have impact in my livelihood. Being a Mobyia to do for the patient, teach the young physicians to learn that kind of approach and they can build on it. In my view, this is the best thing I can give to my motherland.

Thank you very much!

It is my pleasure!

Society

Demera celebration in the eyes of tourists



BY STAFF REPORTER

Ethiopians, adherents of the Christian Orthodox, celebrated Demera (the burning of a large bonfire) and Meskel festivals (which commemorates the discovery of the True Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified) last Wednesday and Thursday on September 27 and 28 respectively.

The Demera festivity was mainly observed on the eve of Meskel, mainly in Addis Ababa, at Meskel Square in the presence of President Sahlework Zewde, Ethiopian Orthodox Church archbishops, religious leaders, the Representative of Addis Ababa City Mayor, Culture and Sports Minister Kejela Merdasa, Addis Ababa Culture, Arts and Tourism Bureau Head Hirut Kasew, dignitaries, ambassadors, members of the diplomatic community and hundreds thousands of laities residing in the capital and the surrounding areas.

The day was marked with a number of breathtaking religious songs and rites performed by Sunday school students, and members of the clergy who dressed in ceremonial vestments and the congregations adorned with white traditional clothes.

Aside from residents of the capital and the surrounding areas, the festival was attended by several tourists who flocked to the country to observe this unique, magnificent and inspiring ceremony.

Some of the tourists who came to Ethiopia from various countries and attended the Demera celebration at Meskel Square expressed their delight and excitement for watching the appealing aspects of the festival.

Raphael Lorenzo, from France, was one of the tourists who witnessed the magnificent features of the event. According to him, the celebration of Demera with a large crowd is something unique for his experience. The colorful way of dressing of the clergy, Sunday school students and the congregation make the event more fascinating and memorable. "I have taken a large number of pictures regarding the celebration of Demera festival; and will share this experience for friends and families in a bid to encourage them to visit Ethiopia in the next year."

Mentioning France's active involvement in the renovation activities of Ethiopia's historical heritages including the Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela and the National Palace, Lorenzo indicated that the actions would play a big role to keep the sites safe. "Extensive promotion of Ethiopia's unique culture and the public's age-old



culture of hospitality is crucial to build the country's positive image among the global community."

Another visitor, Tamas Kelemen, from Hungary, said that the festivity is unique due to its unique church rites such as religious songs and dances displayed by young Sunday school students.

"I am really happy to be here for the first time and attend this exceptional ceremony not only in Ethiopia but also on African soil. I was really impressed with Ethiopia's unique culture and the welcoming environment here.

Hungary has aid projects in Oromia and Afar states and is involved in water management, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programs in different parts of Ethiopia. These activities are helpful to rural women to generate income and restore the drought-affected areas."

Tamas added that as soon as he returned to his country, he would directly introduce the vibrant culture of Ethiopians to his family and his country.

Ray Fisher is from the U.S. Expressing that it is his first time in Ethiopia; Ray expressed his delight to witness such an enticing event. "I am pleased with what I saw. I think Demera should be promoted to the whole world, attract tourists, and generate income to the country."

Ray further expressed his appreciation regarding Ethiopians' much-cherished culture of hospitality and peaceful co-

existence, which he claimed to witness while visiting the different parts of the country.

"I recently travelled to Omo Valley and witnessed the local youth jumping bulls to get married; and various cultural activities here. I am also delighted to witness the costumes of different nationalities in the Demera festivity in Addis Ababa."

"Ethiopia is a country full of amazing cultures and festivities; and I will come back to Ethiopia next year to participate in the holidays," he remarked.

The other tourist who expressed his opinion to ENA is Kinja Mulegwa from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She said that visiting Ethiopia's authentic Meskel celebration is important for Africans to find indigenous spirituality.

According to her, colonialism has affected traditional religion and culture in Africa including in DRC; thus coming and observing this unique festival is vital for her.

Congolese culture and religion is influenced by outsiders essentially beginning from the era of colonization, she indicated.

Grant Bushee, an American Reverend, from New San Francisco, also stated that he came to Ethiopia for the first time to learn about the Ethiopian religion and its similarity and difference to his own Anglican religion.

"The way you celebrate your faith is very impressive. This is a unique experience for me that I think very few of my country's citizens ever get the chance to see. So I feel

very blessed to be here today," he said.

Prior to the Demera celebration, Bushee was fascinated by the traditions and unique customs of various tribes in northern Ethiopia. Thus, he intends to visit the northern part of the country as well.

Noting that he has visited many African countries, Bushee said: "Everything is entirely different from other countries. I have been to Africa. This is a very rich experience for me. I wish more Americans could come here and see this," he remarked.

Ethiopia is an ancient country; and there is so much to learn about Ethiopians' culture and history. Even the early humans were here, he said.

England-born Lauriel Reid, who is an English Language Teacher living in Ethiopia, said many tourists are not experiencing such an amazing ceremony in Ethiopia urging others to visit the country.

"This is an experience of a lifetime; and it should be an important plan you should have in your calendar at least once in your life... You have to experience it for yourself to know how you feel about it. That is my message. Experience Ethiopia for yourself!"

Meskel, the discovery of the True Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified, is one of the intangible heritages inscribed at the UNESCO's list in December 2013 as an Intangible World Heritage. The country is the leading one in Africa for registering 13 tangible and intangible heritages by UNESCO.

Verbatim and Caption

Religious, political leaders ask citizenenes to promote peace, unity



The Cross teaches us to respect others and promote humility, not selfishness. It brings everyone together and reconciles them to God. The Cross is about peace, unity, equality, freedom and the salvation of mankind in general. Practicing the words of the Cross in our practical life is very important.

Practicing the words of the cross in practical life, Ethiopians have to maintain peace and strengthen unity through reconciliation and forgiveness. We preach the cross for the sake of ensuring peace and unity. Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC) demands to ensure justice, peace and love across the country via refraining from destructive activities.

General Manager of EOTC, Abune Abrham message on behalf of EOTC Patriarch Abune Mathias, during Meskel celebration



While celebrating Mawulid al-Nabi, citizens should practice forgiveness and generosity. Humility, kindness and exoneration help us to solve many of our problems. Forgiving much enables us to go forward by overcoming the hurdles.

Distracted by minor problems that occurred here and there, some may feel everything is dark. Hence, there is always light after the dark. Humbleness, kindness and forgiveness are the mechanisms that enable citizens to find the right track that lead them to their destiny. There is no problem that cannot be curbed with humility, generosity and forgiveness.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's (PhD) message on the 1498th Mawulid-al-Nabi celebration

The celebration of Demera is the symbol of Ethiopians coming together for realizing the new heights of Ethiopia. Demera is our symbol of coming together to realize the height of our country.

The pole which unifies and supports the branches and torches of the Demera is symbolic to the federal system which we establish one economic and political community. This is our multinational unity, our Ethiopianism, by so doing, we can build prosperous and strong nation common to us.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's (PhD) message on commemoration of Meskel Demera festival



Mawulid-al-Nabi commemorates all good deeds of the Great Prophet of Islam. We need to recount outcomes which human beings endowed because of the revival by the prophet. The prophet was a man of humanity. Prophet Mohammed teaches us to respect all good things and to reject inhuman things.

Religious commands and values preached by the prophet are fundamental for all human beings. All faithful and Ethiopians have to exert relentless efforts towards preserving peace and security across the country.

Sheikh Abdulkarim Sheikh Bedredin, Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council Deputy President said during Mawulid celebration at the Great Anwar Mosque

The Meskel (finding of the True Cross) festival has become world's asset. The cross preaches peace, unity and togetherness. While celebrating Meskel, this generation should promote peace and unity avoiding divisive activities to live together in a passion. Maintaining unity and peace is vital to live in harmony.

The Meskel festival listed among UNESCO's intangible heritages has become a world treasure with many cultural and spiritual values. The Ministry is ready to support the preservation of these kinds of festivals and celebrants should avoid hatred and revenge. We must live in peace and free from hate preachers.

Kejela Merdasa, Minister of Culture and Sport

